

Testimony for the record by Eddie A. Perez

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The Connecticut General Assembly

Appropriations Committee

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Hearing on Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Commission on Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, African American Affairs Commission, and Commission on Aging

Good afternoon Chairs Harp and Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, The Commission on Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs, The African American Affairs Commission, and The Commission on Aging.**

Connecticut is a State rich in diversity; a fact evidenced today by the wide range of ethnicities, ages, and interests represented in this room. This year's budget calls for the elimination of a number of Commissions that work to protect and nurture that diversity. Without question the State of Connecticut's economic woes demand that we as elected officials and constituents make some very difficult choices. However, we must be mindful of the long-range impact of those choices.

To fully appreciate the consequence of losing any one of the Commissions before you for comment this afternoon, I ask that you to consider the extraordinary work that each of them has done up to today.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women has and continues to aggressively pursue the elimination of sex discrimination in the State of Connecticut. To that end The Commission advocates not only for women's equity alone, but for a wide range of concerns that impact many of us; from family-friendly policies in the work place, to education, to health.

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Women provides law makers with the information they need to make informed decisions on how legislation will affect women throughout the State. The Commission also acts as a conduit between government and the private interest groups and citizens who are invested in services and opportunity for women.

The mission of **The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission** is the advancement of the Latino and Puerto Rican Communities in the State of Connecticut. The LPRAC has worked to earn a number of successes since its creation, helping to pass legislation improving the ease of access to education and health care in the Latino Community. The Commission has placed a strong focus on those health issues that plague the Latino community, fighting against HIV/AIDS, lead poisoning, and asthma.

The Commission provides a unique information service, offering lawmakers and the community publishing the only comprehensive socio-economic study for the Latinos in Connecticut. Additionally, The LPRAC has fought for issues whose impact extends beyond just the Latino community; from comprehensive immigration reform at the national level to greater legal representation for abused and neglected children.

In the twelve short years since its inception **The African American Affairs Commission** has worked diligently to protect and promote the interests of Connecticut's African American population. The Commission was instrumental in the passing of key legislation to curb gun violence, combat hate crime, and restore voting rights to the more than 50,000 Connecticut men and women who've served prison sentences.

The African American Affairs Commission has also taken a strong proactive role in the community. Their "Know How to Go" and "College Goal Sunday" programs have provided over 15,000 first generation and economically disadvantaged children in this State with the tools needed to access higher education. The Commission also works with national health organizations to increase awareness and prevention of chronic diseases and promote good health in the African American community.

The Connecticut Commission on Aging has been committed to improving the lives of Connecticut's older adults for over 16 years. As Connecticut's one million baby boomers grow older, The Commission is needed now more than ever to help prepare us for this demographic change.

The Commission has put forth legislation improving the lives of Connecticut's older population. In 2008 The Commission established the Aging and Disability Resource Center which has allowing senior citizen's greater individual choice concerning their long term care. The Commission has also worked to expand and simplify several Medicaid program options, as well as to address the concerns surrounding an aging workforce and the growing need for elder care.

As you've heard, the Commissions put before you for comment this afternoon have made important gains for the communities that they represent. Certainly now more than ever before minorities have greater representation at all levels of government. Still, the work of these Commissions is not yet complete. If any one of them were shuttered, it would mean an end to coordinated and informed advocacy for the constituencies they represent. Both the economic and social cost of losing those voices would be far greater than any savings made by eliminating the Commissions.

Thank you.